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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Out of the depths we lift our hearts to You, O God, waiting for Your providence to prevail more than they who watch for sunrise. Guide our Senators to find hope in Your presence as they trust the unstoppable cycle of seed time and harvest. Lord, give our lawmakers such reverence for You that they will stand for right although the heavens fall. May they delight in any work they do for You and tire of any rest that is apart from You. Create in them clean hearts, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. May they wait for the power of Your Spirit, working through their faith, to do more than they can ask or imagine.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 265, S. 1845, the unemployment insurance extension.

I ask unanimous consent that the leader time that I use and that of Senator MCCONNELL not count against the half hour that the proponents and opponents of this legislation have to speak, 15 minutes on each side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. The vote will drag a little bit but not very much. My remarks are fairly short.

The Senate will recess from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. to allow for weekly caucus meetings.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Mr. REID. Over the last 45 months America's private sector has done OK—not great but done pretty well. Eight million jobs have been created. The stock market is booming and even the housing market is starting to show signs of life.

A number of States were hit so hard with the decline of the housing market. Nevada was hit the hardest, and California, Florida, Michigan—a number of States—were hit very hard. But even in those States the housing market is turning around a little bit—not enough but turning around. It is clear that the economy is picking up steam—not enough steam but picking up steam.

But for far too many Americans these bright headlines that I have just announced touting good economic news don't match the darker reality of their lives. They sit at the kitchen table—if they are lucky to have a kitchen table—and they are juggling their bills.

It was brought to my attention on the way to work this morning about how hard it is for so many people. On Constitution Avenue, as we were wait-

ing for a light, I could see off to the left a news camera and a reporter trying to wake up somebody who had been spending the night on the pavement—not on the grates where the heat comes up. They kept pushing and pushing. I could see they were talking to him. He or she didn't come out of that bundle of material on that sidewalk.

I don't know if this man is one of the long-term unemployed. I don't know. But there are lots of people who are in desperate shape. They may not be sleeping on a sidewalk on Constitution Avenue 14 blocks from the White House, but there are people in America who are desperate for help.

There are 1.3 million people who have already lost their unemployment insurance benefits. This is not good for the country. We are told by economists that for every \$1 we spend on unemployment benefits it gets \$1.50 back to us just like that. So we have to start understanding that we have a country where not everyone is benefiting from what is going on with these headlines I just reported.

Over the last 30 years the income and wealth of the top 1 percent has increased 300 percent. The middle class dropped almost 10 percent. Think about it, 300 percent; the middle class about a 10-percent drop.

I haven't even mentioned the poor. They have been hit harder than anyone else. When I say this, it is true. The rich are getting a lot richer and the poor are getting poorer. The middle class is being squeezed.

I have nothing against people of wealth. It is great we live in a country where people can make a lot of money, but we have to understand there are people who are really hurting. For those who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own—and millions of them have struggled for months to find new work—a booming stock market of increasing corporate profits is of little comfort to them.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Fortunately, Americans looking for work have been able to rely on unemployment insurance to get them through the tough times. But for 1.3 million people, no deal; 20,000 are veterans returning from wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

At the end of last year, only a few days ago, Congress failed to extend unemployment emergency insurance for Americans who have been looking for work for more than 6 months. We have never in the history of our country had long-term unemployment such as today—never in the history of our Republic. Yet we are turning 1.3 million people away. Are they going to be the next ones sleeping on some street—wherever they come from—trying to stay warm?

For many Americans these benefits make the difference between being able to live a decent life—not a good life, a decent life—and going hungry or becoming homeless.

Let us go back to 2012. In 2012 unemployment insurance helped 2.5 million people, including 600,000 children, from going into the rolls of poverty. We don't have all the results from last year. These families live in red States, blue States, Republicans, Democrats, or Independents. We shouldn't turn our backs on them.

In the past, we have worked together. Did we complain when President Bush came to us? Unemployment was nowhere near where it is now. There were enough long-term unemployed, and we automatically together extended those benefits. Not today. We are not doing it because we can't get the Republicans to help us. We have reached out the hand to hardworking Americans struggling to get by.

I would hope we can get a few Republicans to join DEAN HELLER of Nevada, a conservative Senator. Join with DEAN HELLER, a junior Senator from Nevada, and help get this legislation passed.

In the latest round of emergency assistance, George Bush was the person who signed that bill. At the time the unemployment rate was about 5.5 percent. Today in Nevada and Rhode Island—the State of Senator JACK REED, who will speak—it is about 9 percent.

The long-term unemployment rate today is more than double what it was at the time that we let emergency job assistance expire. Senator HELLER understands. I am troubled that most of Senator HELLER's Republican colleagues, according to what we are hearing in the press, callously turned their backs on the long-term unemployed.

I am saddened. I hope that we can get them to move over and help us to help these people who need it so very much. Failing to restore emergency assistance would not only be a crushing blow to the long-term unemployed, it would be a blow to our economy.

Americans use their unemployment benefits to buy food and fuel at local gas stations, to pay their landlords or to purchase for a child a winter coat.

That is why for every dollar we spend on unemployment benefits, I repeat, the economy grows by \$1.50. This investment in our fellow Americans is one of the most effective ways to spark and sustain an economic recovery.

Last night the senior Senator from Texas, a Republican, asked that we delay this vote until today. I was pleased to do that. He called this a serious issue, and he is very correct. The senior Senator from Texas is correct. This is a serious issue. It is as serious to people outside Nevada as it is to those people from Nevada who have been out of work for so long. People from Nevada have written and called my office, calling and begging for a little more time.

For every job that is available, there are three that are unemployed in America. We Democrats stand united in support of this extension. Republicans need to take this seriously as well as we.

I hope Republicans remember that during hard times, that during times of high unemployment—regardless of who is in the White House or who led this Chamber—Congress is always willing to put politics aside and put American families first.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I indicated to the majority leader I was going to ask unanimous consent, which I am prepared to do at this point. I have to admit, I am a little surprised at the fervor with which the majority is dedicated to reviving the expired emergency unemployment benefits after they ignored the issue all of last year. I am sure there are many on my side who would like to see these additional weeks of benefits extended if—as the Speaker of the House indicated he supported—we could find a way to extend them without actually adding to the national debt.

To that end I would like to propose that we be allowed—my side be allowed—to offer an amendment to pay for these benefits by lifting the burden of ObamaCare's individual mandate for 1 year and take care of our veterans who were harmed by the recently agreed-to budget deal while we are in the same amendment, and once that is disposed of we can have an actual de-

bate on this issue and an amendment process in the Senate, which hasn't happened very often in recent times.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that if cloture is invoked on the motion to proceed to S. 1845, all postcloture time be yielded back and the Senate proceed to the consideration of the bill and that my amendment with Senator HATCH be the first amendment in order and that there be up to 1 hour of debate on the amendment divided in the usual form; that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate then proceed to a vote in relation to that amendment. I further ask unanimous consent that following the disposition of that amendment, it be in order for the majority leader or his designee to offer an amendment and it be in order for the leaders or their designees to continue to offer amendments in alternating fashion, which used to be the way we did business around here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object—and I appreciate how candid my Republican counterpart is and I say that seriously—I do speak with some, or I try, though I am not real good at speaking with a lot of fervor, as everyone knows—but I feel very strongly about this issue. For people who are unemployed and can't find a job, it is a tough deal. I have, fortunately, always had a job. I can't say the same for my family, especially my dad. So I do speak with as much fervor as I am capable on this issue.

The reason I mention I am glad my friend is being so candid is—listen to this—no one can in any way dispute my facts. For every \$1 spent, we get \$1.50 back. That doesn't add to the deficit. So as I see this picture from the consent request, I am seeing that we are going to take away ObamaCare, which 9 million new people have and are signing up at the rate of thousands every day. We are going to take away their benefits, in some form or fashion, and we are going to trump the bipartisan agreement we have with MIKULSKI and ROGERS. They are coming up with an omnibus bill. I know my friend has already stated he initially was against the budget deal, but I would bet that is addressed in this deal MIKULSKI and ROGERS will come up with—this helping of veterans.

So this is a guise to obstruct, as has been happening during the 5 years President Obama has been President of the United States, and I object with as much fervor as I can.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, over the past several days, we have seen a number of stories about how Democrats plan to spend the year gearing up for the November elections by making an issue out of economic hardships faced by Americans; in other words, instead of working on reforms that would actually help people overcome the challenges so many of them